SOCIAL AND CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH GRANTS

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Institute of Education Sciences
http://www.ed.gov/offices/IES/funding.html

LETTER OF INTENT RECEIPT DATE: March 6, 2003

APPLICATION RECEIPT DATE: April 25, 2003

THIS REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS CONTAINS THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION:

Request for Applications

The Institute of Education Sciences, in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), invites applications for research projects that will contribute to its research program on Social and Character Development. For this competition, the Institute will consider only applications that meet the requirements outlined below under the section on Requirements of the Proposed Research.

Purpose of the Research Program

The purpose of the program of research on Social and Character Development is to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions designed to promote positive social and character development, increase positive behaviors, and reduce antisocial behaviors among elementary school children. Interventions should focus on building social and emotional competencies and on developing important skills, such as self-regulation, conflict resolution, and social problem solving.

Background

There has been increased concern in our nation over the prevalence of antisocial behaviors (e.g., aggression, delinquency, violence) and over the lack of development of positive character traits (e.g., altruism, responsibility, civic virtue) among our children and youth. For instance, the National Center for Education Statistics (2001) reported that students between the ages of 12 and 18 are victim to some 2.5 million crimes of violence or theft at school each year. Since the 1990s there has been growing consensus that prevention of antisocial behaviors should be linked to promotion of positive characteristics in programs that address multiple aspects of social and character development (e.g., Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1995; Catalano et al., 2002; Consortium on the School-Based Promotion of Social Competence, 1992; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

This research initiative builds on advances in our understanding of the development of positive and negative behaviors based on the research of developmental, social, community, behavioral, and cognitive psychologists (e.g., Damon, 1999; Eisenberg, 2000; Larson, 2000; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) and on our knowledge of intervention and evaluation from prevention science, youth development, and character education (e.g., Catalano et al., 2002; Emler, 1996). There has been increasing recognition that drawing across these knowledge bases would facilitate our understanding of the positive development of children and youth (e.g., Catalano et al., 2002; Kellam & Rebok, 1992; Larson, 2000; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

The 2001 *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) requires education decision-makers to base instructional practices and programs on scientifically-based research. Evidence of effectiveness of school-based social and character development programs, however, is limited. In some areas (e.g., character education curricula), little has been done in the way of rigorous evaluations utilizing randomized experimental designs to answer causal questions about the effectiveness of the interventions (Emler, 1996; Leming, 2001). More rigorous evaluations have been conducted on those interventions that are based on research on the etiology of specific antisocial behaviors and are framed within the context of children's overall social, emotional, and cognitive development (e.g., Allen, Weissberg, & Hawkins, 1989; Botvin, Baker, Dusenbury, & Botvin, 1990; Caplan & Weissberg, 1989; Carroll & Steward, 1984; Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group, 1999; Cook, Greenberg, & Kusche, 1994; Crick & Dodge, 1996; Greenberg, Kusche, Cook, & Quamma, 1995; Lochman & Dodge, 1994; Weissberg & Caplan, 1998).

In response to the need for rigorous evaluations of school-based programs that promote positive character development and reduce school violence and other antisocial behaviors, the

Institute of Education Sciences, in collaboration with the CDC's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, launches the Social and Character Development research program. This initiative targets elementary school children. By middle childhood (8 to 12 years of age), children should have well-developed skills of self-regulation, empathy, and caring. Because these skills underlie many primary developmental tasks of middle childhood (e.g., development of mutual friendships), if they are not developing as expected, then psychologists anticipate problem behaviors emerging. In fact, this is the case. Most types of antisocial behavior (e.g., aggression, bullying, violence) are already evident by third grade (Loeberg & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1998). Because middle childhood is a time when children's beliefs about aggression and conflict resolution skills are developing, researchers have suggested that interventions aimed at preventing youth violence ought to begin at this time (e.g., Samples & Aber, 1998). Furthermore, middle childhood is a time when children's friendship and peer relationships provide important contexts within which children struggle with moral issues of loyalty, trust, honesty, justice, and kindness. In developmental models of friendship, middle childhood has been described as a transitional period when children move from focusing on the behavioral manifestations of friendship to the psychological traits that enable intimate friendships (e.g., Berndt, 1986; Bukowski & Sippola, 1996). Thus, middle childhood is a time when children's thinking about friends and friendships dovetails with their emerging understanding of psychological traits and may provide multiple "teachable moments" for character traits. The Social and Character Development research program will support rigorous evaluations of school-based youth development interventions that promote positive character development and reduce antisocial behavior and school violence among elementary school children.

Requirements of the Proposed Research

The goal of the Social and Character Development research initiative is to conduct rigorous evaluations of school-based interventions or curricula for which, at least, some "soft" evidence of the effectiveness of the proposed intervention already exists. Applicants may integrate components from different existing interventions that have empirical support to create a new, improved or more comprehensive program, but this initiative is *not* intended to support the development of new interventions or curricula. In addition, although the interventions must be school-based, they may include student participation in other settings (e.g., volunteering in community agencies). The long-term goal of this initiative is to provide scientific information to assist schools in choosing specific school-based interventions that promote positive character development, reduction of negative behaviors, or both.

The outcomes of greatest interest are social and emotional competence (e.g., self-regulation, responsibility, perspective-taking, conflict resolution, social problem solving skills), prosocial behaviors and attitudes (e.g., caring, citizenship, fairness, giving, volunteerism), and reduction of negative behaviors (e.g., aggression, violence). Other outcomes of interest include aspects of school climate, such as attendance, tardiness, truancy, vandalism, parental involvement in school activities, teacher retention, and school staff morale. Although interventions may target belief and attitudinal changes, the programs must be designed to effect behavioral change in students.

Through *cooperative agreements* awarded by the Institute of Education Sciences, grantees will work with the U.S. Department of Education, the Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention, and a national evaluation contractor, funded through a separate competition by the Institute of Education Sciences, to carry out randomized experiments of selected social and character development interventions. The national evaluation contractor, working with the Institute, CDC, and recipients of the site grants, will collect a core set of measures following consistent protocols across sites so that comparable outcome data (including measures of positive and negative behaviors, social and emotional competence, academic achievement, and school climate) will be obtained across sites. Details concerning the responsibilities of each grantee vis-à-vis the national contractor are provided in the section below. Grantees do *not* need to budget for the collection of the student and parent core outcome data (i.e., cross-site data), which will be collected by the national contractor.

The general design applicants must propose is a randomized experiment in which each site will randomly assign elementary schools to the intervention or comparison group. Year 1 will be considered a pilot year in which grantees may work out final development issues for the intervention, pilot specific outcome measures, refine materials, work out implementation issues, train teachers and other intervention staff, and begin the site specific complementary research (described below). Such pilot work could, but need not, include a series of replicated single-case research designs. Applicants must specify in detail what activities will be conducted in the pilot year. The implementation of the intervention will occur during Years 2-4. The national evaluation contractor will collect data from each site in the fall and spring of years 2 and 3, and the spring of year 4 of the award. The core set of evaluation data collected by the national contractor will include assessments of children's social and emotional competence, prosocial attitudes and behaviors, and negative attitudes and behaviors; family characteristics; and school climate. The contractor will collect these data through (a) direct assessments of the children using group testing procedures at school, (b) surveys of the parents of participating children, (c) observational measures of school climate, and (d) school record documentation. The core set of evaluation data (i.e., data to be used in the cross-site analyses) collected by individual grantees will include paper-and-pencil teacher assessments of participating children and school staff surveys of overall school climate (Note, applicants do need to budget for the collection of these data; however, the survey materials will be prepared by the contractor for the grantees). The core evaluation data will be collected by the contractor and the individual grantees beginning in Year 1 of the implementation of intervention and continuing through Years 2 and 3 of the implementation. (Note, for their complementary studies, applicants are not limited to collecting data through group assessment procedures.)

For this research program, each applicant must:

(a) Propose to implement a school-wide intervention that is appropriate for elementary school children and designed to promote positive character development thereby reducing negative behaviors and to coordinate with a national contractor the assessment of children, parents, and school environment. The intervention schools at a specific site must implement the same intervention. The intervention must *not* be implemented in an intervention or comparison school prior to the beginning of the evaluation study;

(b) Provide a convincing theoretical and empirical rationale for the proposed intervention being likely to improve children's outcomes compared with the practices used in the comparison conditions. Programs must have some preliminary data or "soft" evidence supporting the effectiveness of the intervention or the effectiveness of the components of the intervention, if the applicant is pulling together components to form a more comprehensive intervention. (Note, preliminary or soft evidence means that the data may not be conclusive. The preliminary data may have been gathered in such a way as not to rule out alternative hypotheses. For example, the investigator might have pre-test and post-test data indicating improvement in positive behavior or reduction of negative behaviors in a school or classroom using the intervention, but not have data from a control group. Preliminary data may include data that were obtained separately for specific components of the proposed intervention, but not from an evaluation of all of the proposed intervention components integrated into one intervention. Preliminary data may be data that were collected on a small sample under very limited conditions.) Finally, applicants should describe any social and character development-type activities that are already occurring in the selected schools and discuss how this may affect the results;

(c) Be able to guarantee access to 8 to 10 elementary schools comprised of K-5th grade or K-6th grade classrooms that agree to implement the proposed intervention (if selected for the treatment condition) and to allow data collection to occur as outlined in this initiative (whether school is selected for the treatment or comparison condition). In circumstances where an applicant cannot guarantee access to 10 schools (e.g., the applicant is assessing children who live in a rural area where elementary schools are few in number and widely dispersed), the applicant must provide a rationale and explanation for assessing that population of children using a smaller number of schools. The smallest number of schools that will be considered adequate for this program of research, however, is 8. Note that schools are not required to belong to the same school district. All applicants must justify the number of schools for their site-specific study through a power analysis and demonstrate sufficient power to detect effects on the primary outcomes using the school as the unit of analysis. Within each school, there must be a minimum of 2 classrooms per grade for grades 3, 4, and 5. Although data on school climate, overall student behavior, and school staff perspectives will be obtained at the school level, individual student attitude and behavior data will only be collected from 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade classrooms. In Year 2 of the award (i.e., the first year of the implementation of the intervention), data will be obtained from a minimum of two 3rd grade classrooms per school with a minimum of 50 children per school. (Note, the goal is to have 50 children per school at the end of the study. Applicants must take attrition into account, provide some evidence for the anticipated rate of attrition, and recruit schools and children accordingly.) These children will be followed through 4th and 5th grades in Years 3 and 4. The national contractor can accommodate data collection using the core battery for a maximum of 10 schools and 700 children for each applicant. An applicant that proposes to include more than the maximum must include the costs of additional data collection in its budget;

(d) Employ random assignment of schools to the intervention and comparison conditions in the evaluation design. A school that is to be a site for the intervention must agree to cooperate fully with the random assignment as a condition for the applicant to receive an award. To facilitate random assignment, applicants may offer incentives to schools, such as compensation for additional staff time required to cooperate with the research effort; and provision of additional

resources to enable a school to conduct new activities. For comparison schools, it is possible to provide intervention training to the school staff in the summer of Year 4 once the final cross-site data collection has been completed. Applicants should discuss likely threats to the internal validity of the study including attrition, student mobility, existing social and character development activities or programs at comparison schools, and potential difficulty in implementation;

(e) Provide a letter of cooperation from participating schools or school districts for the purposes of conducting the research. In the letter of cooperation, representatives of the participating schools or school districts must clearly indicate and accept the responsibilities associated with participating in the study. These responsibilities must include (1) agreement to provide a sufficient number of classrooms per school to participate in the study; (2) agreement to the random assignment of schools to the intervention being evaluated versus the comparison group (i.e., "business as usual"); (3) agreement for the cross-site study contractor to assess children for approximately 50 minutes in the fall and 50 minutes in the spring semester each year; (4) agreement to ensure that all of the 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade teachers will participate in the study (schools assigned to the comparison condition must understand that they will be participating in data collection activities); and (5) agreement to cooperate with school-level data collection of school climate indicators (e.g., teachers completing student behavior checklists, data from school records indicating number of students receiving office referrals);

(f) Provide an on-site coordinator to manage all aspects of data collection, intervention implementation, and interaction with the national contractor;

(g) Be prepared to collaborate with Institute and CDC staff in the development of the human subjects protocol for the CDC Institutional Review Board and *to have approval from the applicant's Institutional Review Board for conducting research with human subjects in time to begin recruiting families for the cross-site study in the spring of Year 1 of the award*. Applicants need to have approval both for their own site-specific research and for the cross-site data collection;

(h) Be prepared to obtain active informed consent of parents of children participating in the study, and of all school staff from whom data will be collected;

(i) Be prepared to provide all necessary materials, training, and professional development to teachers and staff to implement the intervention to be evaluated in the intervention schools;

(j) Be prepared to work with the national evaluation contractor for the collection of cross-site data, in coordination with any local data collection activities and understanding that the timing of the cross-site data collection will take precedence over the timing of any data collection activities for the complementary studies (described below). The national contractor will collect all of the cross-site outcome data from children, parents, and school records and will collect observational data of school climate. The applicant will be responsible for and must be prepared to make all on-site arrangements necessary for the national contractor to collect these data, including arranging access to schools and obtaining parent contact information (in much the same way, for example, that the applicant's project coordinator would arrange for research assistants to collect

data at the schools). The staff from the national contractor will represent themselves as data collectors for the applicant's research project, not as individuals with a separate project. The applicant will be responsible for collecting core evaluation data (i.e., data to be used in the cross-site analyses) from school staff and sending data to the contractor in a timely fashion. There will be regular conference calls with Institute staff, CDC staff, the national contractor, and each grantee to discuss, plan, and coordinate evaluation activities at each site. There will be two annual meetings of Institute staff, CDC staff, the national contractor, and all grantees for purposes of planning and coordinating the project;

(k) Understand that Institute staff, working with CDC staff, will be collaborating with grantees in the cross-site study. Aided by CDC staff, Institute staff will (1) provide scientific and technical assistance for the design and implementation of the cross-site research; (2) collaborate with the grantee in the development of a research protocol for IRB review by all collaborating institutions; (3) participate in the analysis, presentation, and publication of the cross-site study findings; and (4) monitor and evaluate the scientific and operational accomplishments of the project through conference calls, site visits, and review of technical reports;

(l) Plan to conduct an economic analysis of the intervention (i.e., one of the outcome measures that should be collected by the grantee is the cost to conduct the intervention so that the cost-effectiveness of the intervention may be determined);

(m) Provide evidence for the existence of or a plan to create an implementation manual for the intervention that provides sufficient information for others to be able to adopt and replicate the program; and

(n) Propose complementary studies to conduct in conjunction with the cross-site program evaluation. Complementary studies provide investigators with the opportunity to design studies and collect data within the context of the cross-site evaluation. Investigators will be responsible for collecting (and budgeting for the collection of) the data for their complementary studies. The complementary research studies may address a range of issues related broadly to the effectiveness of the intervention, the mechanisms by which the intervention promotes children's social and character development, the development of assessment tools, or other related topics. The complementary research provides an opportunity to identify outcomes that, because of data constraints, are not explored in the core evaluation or are specific to an individual site. It expands the possibilities for multiple measures of the same variable, and for the development of new measures. Complementary research designs may involve assessing children from other grades while children in the first cohort of the cross-site study are being followed from 3rd grade through 5th grade. The scientific merit of the complementary studies will be considered an important aspect of the applicant's proposal.

In the proposal, the applicant must include:

(a) Clear and complete descriptions of the intervention condition and comparison condition;

(b) An explanation of procedures for randomly assigning schools to intervention or comparison groups, assessing the fidelity of the intervention's implementation and any social and character

development-type activities at the comparison schools, and identifying potential sources of threat to the internal and external validity of the intervention. (Note, because the comparison schools may have activities or programs designed to promote positive behaviors and reduce antisocial behaviors, the applicant must have a plan for assessing the degree to which comparison schools engage in social and character development-type activities);

(c) The logic of sampling so as to capture, to the degree possible, diversity in the school population to be studied. Core variables an applicant should consider for capturing diversity include: race or ethnicity status; language status; existence of an IEP; parents' birth places; parental education; parental occupation; and household income;

(d) A discussion of possible variations in the structure of the participating schools (public or private; K-5 or K-6 buildings; etc.) and how the applicant will take these variations into consideration in the evaluation design; and

(e) A description of how the applicant will document implementation of and fidelity to the intervention. Applicants must describe plans for ensuring that the curriculum is implemented as it has been designed. Applicants should also describe plans to assess whether staff have been successfully trained to deliver the program using measurable training criteria.

As indicated below, the Institute anticipates that the earliest start date will be August 25, 2003. A rough guideline of the recruitment and data collection timeline for the cross-site study is described here. Note that many critical research activities (e.g., obtaining IRB approval, recruiting schools, collecting fidelity of intervention measures) are not included in the timeline. This rough guideline is provided only to give applicants a general idea of the timeframe for the cross-site research activities.

Year 1	September through August	Planning and preparation with Institute, CDC, and national contractor for cross-site study Train school staff
	April through August	Recruit parents; secure informed consent[1]
Year 2	September through June	Year 1 implementation of intervention
	August/September through October	Fall Year 1 general data collection
	April through May	Spring Year 1 general data collection
	June through August	Data coding and entry of general data
Year 3	September through June	Year 2 implementation of intervention
	August/September through October	Fall Year 2 general data collection
	April through May	Spring Year 2 general data collection
	June through August	Data coding and entry of general data
Year 4	September through June	Year 3 implementation of intervention
	April through May	Spring Year 3 general data collection

June through August Data coding and entry of general data

[1]Each site must have secured parent consent by the end of the second week of school. Grantees are expected to begin securing parent consent prior to the beginning of school year so that only parents of new students who are enrolled during the beginning of the year need to be contacted for parental consent in the first two weeks. The pre-intervention data collection must be completed during the first two months of the school year.

In addition to the above requirements, an applicant that is not a research organization must obtain the services of at least one consultant or have a staff member who is an established researcher and who has committed enough time to the project to assure the integrity of the local evaluation and to participate in all required meetings.

Applications Available

Application forms and instructions for the electronic submission of applications will be available for this program of research no later than February 21, 2003, from the following web site:

http://ies.asciences.com

Mechanism of Support

The Institute intends to award grants in the form of cooperative agreements for periods up to 48 months pursuant to this request for applications.

Funding Available

The Institute may award up to 8 grants as a result of this competition and expects that the typical award will be approximately $450,000 per year for 4 years. Although the plans of the Institute include this program of research, awards pursuant to this request for applications are contingent upon the availability of funds and the receipt of a sufficient number of meritorious applications.

Eligible Applicants

Applicants that have the ability and capacity to conduct scientifically valid research are eligible to apply. Eligible applicants include, but are not limited to, non-profit and for-profit organizations and public and private agencies and institutions, such as colleges and universities.

Special Requirements

Applicants should budget for two meetings each year in Washington, DC, with other grantees and Institute staff. At least one project representative should attend each two-day meeting.

Letter of Intent

A letter indicating a potential applicant's intent to submit an application is optional, but encouraged, for each application. The letter of intent is to be sent by the date listed at the beginning of this document and should indicate -- in the email subject line -- the title of the program of research covered by this request for applications and the number of the request. The title and number of this request for applications are also specified at the beginning of this document. Receipt of the letter of intent will be acknowledged by e-mail.

The letter of intent should not exceed one page in length and should include a descriptive title and brief description of the research project; the name, institutional affiliation, address, telephone number and e-mail address of the principal investigator(s); and the name and institutional affiliation of any key collaborators. The letter of intent should indicate the duration of the proposed project and provide an estimated budget request by year, and a total budget request. Although the letter of intent is optional, is not binding, and does not enter into the review of subsequent applications, the information that it contains allows Institute staff to estimate the potential workload to plan the review. The letter of intent should be submitted by e-mail to:

IES-LOI@asciences.com

Submitting an Application

Applications must be submitted electronically by the application receipt date, using the ED standard forms and the instructions provided at the following web site:

http://ies.asciences.com

Potential applicants should check this site as soon as possible after February 21, 2003, when application forms and instructions first become available, for information about the electronic submission procedures that must be followed and the software that will be required.

The application form approved for this program is OMB Number 1890-0009.

Contents and Page Limits of Application

The application must include the following sections: (1) title page form (ED 424); (2) budget summary form (ED 524); (3) one-page abstract; (4) research narrative; (5) references; (6) curriculum vitae for principal investigators(s) and other key personnel (limited to 3 pages each and including only information sufficient to demonstrate that personnel possess training and expertise commensurate with their duties); (7) narrative budget justification; and (8) appendix.

The one-page *abstract* must include: The title of the project and brief descriptions of (1) the purpose of the project or the educational problem that will be addressed; (2) the population(s) from which the participants of the study(ies) will be sampled (age groups, race/ethnicity, SES); (3) the proposed research method(s); and (4) the proposed intervention.

Incorporating the requirements outlined under the section on Requirements of the Proposed Research, the *research narrative* provides the majority of the information on which reviewers will evaluate the proposal and should address:

(a) Significance of the Project
   (1) Identify the educational problem that will be addressed by the study and describe the contribution the study will make to a solution to that problem.

(b) Approach
   (1) Provide a theoretical framework and review relevant prior empirical evidence supporting the proposed project, including a description of the intervention along with the conceptual rationale and empirical evidence supporting the intervention;
   (2) Include clear, concise hypotheses or research questions;
   (3) Present a clear description of, and a rationale for, the sample or study participants, including justification for exclusion and inclusion criteria and, where groups or conditions are involved, strategies for assigning participants to groups;
   (4) Provide clear descriptions of, and rationales for, data collection procedures and measures to be used; and
   (5) Present a detailed data analysis plan that justifies and explains the selected analytic strategy, shows clearly how the measures and analyses relate to the hypotheses or research questions, and indicates how the results will be interpreted. Quantitative studies should, where sufficient information is available, include a power analysis to provide some assurance that the sample is of sufficient size.

(c) Personnel
   (1) Include brief descriptions of the qualifications of key personnel (information on personnel should also be provided in their curriculum vitae).

(d) Resources
   (1) Provide a description of the resources available to support the project at the applicant's institution and in the field settings in which the research will be conducted.

The research narrative (text plus all figures, charts, tables, and diagrams) is limited to the equivalent of 25 pages, where a "page" is 8.5 in. x 11 in., on one side only, with 1 inch margins at the top, bottom, and both sides. Double space (no more than 3 lines per vertical inch) all text in the research narrative. Use a font that is either 12-point or larger, or no smaller than 10 pitch (i.e., 10 characters per inch).

The 25-page limit does not apply to the title page form, the one-page abstract, the budget summary form and narrative budget justification, the curriculum vitae, references, or the assurances and certifications.

Reviewers are able to conduct the highest quality review when applications are concise and easy to read, with pages numbered consecutively.

The *budget justification* must provide sufficient detail to allow reviewers to judge whether reasonable costs have been attributed to the project. It must include the time commitments and brief descriptions of the responsibilities of key personnel.

The *appendix* must include letters of agreement from all partners (e.g., schools) and consultants. Each letter should include enough information to make it clear that the author of the letter understands the nature of the commitment of time, space, and resources to the research project that will be required if the application is funded. The appendix is limited to 15 pages.

Application Processing

Applications must be received by 11:59 p.m. Eastern time on the application receipt date listed in the heading of this request for applications. Upon receipt, each application will be reviewed for completeness and for responsiveness to this request for applications. Incomplete applications and applications that do not address specific requirements of this request will be returned to the applicants without further consideration.

Peer Review Process

Applications that are complete and responsive to this request will be evaluated for scientific and technical merit. Reviews will be conducted in accordance with the review criteria stated below.

Each application will be assigned to at least two primary reviewers who will complete written evaluations of the application, identifying strengths and weaknesses related to each of the review criteria. Primary reviewers will independently assign a score for each criterion, as well as an overall score, for each application they review. Based on the overall scores assigned by primary reviewers, an average overall score for each application will be calculated and a preliminary rank order of applications prepared before the full peer review panel convenes to complete the review of applications.

The 30 applications deemed to have the highest merit, as reflected by the preliminary rank order, will be reviewed by a full panel of approximately 20 individuals who have substantive and methodological expertise appropriate to the program of research and request for applications, and who served as primary reviewers for individual applications. An individual reviewer may propose to the full panel that a particular application that does not score among the top 30 in the preliminary scoring but which the reviewer believes merits consideration should also be reviewed. The panel will decide whether to review any such application.

All members of the peer review panel will be expected to review the 30 applications being considered by the panel. Following presentations by the primary reviewers and discussion by the full panel, each member of the peer review panel will score each application, assigning a score for each criterion, as well as an overall score. In addition, reviewers will indicate whether or not an application is recommended for funding.

Review Criteria

The goal of Institute-supported research is to contribute to the solution of educational problems and to provide reliable information about the educational practices that support learning and improve academic achievement and access to educational opportunities for all students. Reviewers will be expected to assess the following aspects of an application in order to judge the

likelihood that the proposed research will have a substantial impact on the pursuit of that goal. Information pertinent to each of these criteria is also described above in the section on Requirements of the Proposed Research and in the description of the research narrative, which appears in the section on Contents and Page Limits of Application.

- Significance (importance of the addressed problem, contribution of project to solution of the problem)
- Approach (conceptual rationale, hypotheses or research questions, measures, research design, analytic methods)
- Personnel (qualifications of project staff)
- Resources (support at applicant's institution and at field settings)

Strong applications for Social and Character Development Research Grants clearly address each of the review criteria. They make a well-reasoned and compelling case for the significance of the project and the problems or issues that will be the subject of the proposed research. They present a research design (approach) that is complete and clearly delineated, and that incorporates sound research methods. In addition, the personnel descriptions included in strong applications make it apparent that the project director, principal investigator, and other key personnel possess training and experience commensurate with their duties. Descriptions of facilities, equipment, supplies, and other resources demonstrate that they are adequate to support the proposed activities. Commitments of each partner show support for the implementation and success of the project.

Receipt and Review Schedule

Letter of Intent Receipt Date: March 6, 2003
Application Receipt Date: April 25, 2003
Peer Review Date: June 26-27, 2003
Earliest Anticipated Start Date: August 25, 2003

Award Decisions

The following will be considered in making award decisions:

- Scientific merit as determined by the peer review
- Responsiveness to the requirements of this request
- Performance and use of funds under a previous Federal award
- Contribution to the overall program of research described in this request
- Availability of funds

Direct your questions to:

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PROGRAM AUTHORITY: 20 U.S.C. 9501 et seq., the "Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002," Title I of Public Law 107-279, November 5, 2002. This program is not subject to the intergovernmental review requirements of Executive Order 12372.

APPLICABLE REGULATIONS: The Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 74, 77, 80, 81, 82, 85, 86 (part 86 applies only to Institutions of Higher Education), 97, 98, and 99. In addition, 34 CFR part 75 is applicable, except for the provisions in 34 CFR 75.102, 75.103, 75.105, 75.109(a), 75.200, 75.201, 75.209, 75.210, 75.217, 75.219, 75.220, and 75.230.